

**Barbara Sasso**  
**Teacher, New Haven Public Schools**  
**American Federation of Teachers, Recovery for All**  
**Resident of Hamden**

General Comments: HB-6659 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM  
ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Governor's proposed budget for public education.

I have been teaching at Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven for over 25 years. I am testifying today, because the Governor's proposed budget is abysmal. It fails to guarantee the basic minimum that our students deserve. Connecticut can do better.

I urge you to fully fund the ECS formula, at a minimum, this year. I urge you to send additional funding to the districts that have been underfunded for decades: the districts serving students who are low-income, English Language Learners, and students of color.

I have some questions:

In the 25 years I've been teaching, Wilbur Cross has experienced chronic shortages of standard school equipment: textbooks, lab equipment, toilet paper, soap, classroom supplies, lamps for overhead projectors, printers, toner, computers, copiers, paper, desks, and chairs.

Many of us gave up and just bought these things ourselves. Now, we use "Donors Choose" – a platform where we stand with our tin cups out, begging for basic supplies.

**My classroom periodically floods. The toilets have chronic issues of overflowing.** Our athletic field, gym, and lockers are a disgrace. The school perimeter grows poison ivy. The parking lot is an illegal dumping ground for the City, where trash piles up and rats and mice find their way into the school building.

**Students have been without a Spanish and math teacher the entire year.** Our sports teams, drama, and music departments are underfunded.

I have some questions: Why is it that some suburban districts have all the teachers they need? Why is it that suburban students with disabilities get personal aides to help them in their classes? Why is it that suburban schools have after-school programs and late buses to take students home? Why is it that no one in the wealthier districts needs to go on Donors Choose to purchase a new instrument, uniforms, or a classroom set of books?

The gap between rich schools and poor schools is shameful and damning for the State of Connecticut. See data at "The State of Education Funding in Connecticut"

<https://stateofeducationfunding.org/state/connecticut/?category=students-of-color>

My school is proof of that. Why don't you come and visit? Meet the many talented and creative students in my school who have an opportunity -- if you fund it -- to become exemplary citizens. This country needs my students: doctors, nurses, computer programmers, teachers, caregivers, technicians, politicians, engineers, scientists, lawyers, business leaders, social workers, and especially -- people completely equipped to build real and virtual bridges. New Haven is a sanctuary city, and our students are from all over the world. About half of them are bilingual.

Our students deserve better. We are on our fourth principal since last year ended. We don't have enough space or paraprofessionals to educate our students who have severe disabilities. **Instead of learning, students spend multiple class periods in the freezing cold auditorium because they do not have a substitute teacher.**

I urge you to support legislation that guarantees **the fundamental right of free public schooling for all of Connecticut's children.** We should assure that all citizens, ESPECIALLY THE UNDERPRIVILEGED are educated. NOT ONLY to reach economic parity, but to assure that our democracy has a voting base of educated people who actively participate in our democracy to make sure that all of us have equal treatment under the law, equal rights, and equal opportunity to achieve.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.